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SUBJECT: BILATERAL DONORS AND INGOS PRESS GOVERNMENT ON
ACCESS

REF: A) COLOMBO 1884 B) COLOMBO 1747 C) COLOMBO 1626

AND PREVIOUS

THIS MESSAGE IS SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED.

¶1. (SBU) Summary. Meetings of the Bilateral Donors Group (BDG) and the Consultative Committee Meeting on Humanitarian Assistance (CCMHA) this past week focused on NGO access and the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Sri Lanka's North and East. While BDG members, the UN, the ICRC, and the EU are pressing for improved access to LTTE-controlled areas and Jaffna, the Secretary of Defense remains reluctant. He did propose an alternative land route to Jaffna, however. Donors will ask for a meeting with President Rajapaksa to discuss the findings of the BDG field missions. End summary.

¶2. (U) Representatives from the BDG conducted monitoring missions to Ampara, Batticaloa, Trincomalee and Jaffna from October 5-13, 2006 to assess the humanitarian situation and delivery of aid. They presented their report at a November 9 Donors' Group meeting hosted attended by AID Director. A discussion on November 3 at the second meeting of the CCMHA (high-level group on NGO access) brought together representatives of the GSL, the UN, Red Cross, World Food Program, and the EU to discuss access to "uncleared" (Tiger-controlled) areas and the opening of supply routes to Jaffna.

¶3. (SBU) The BDG field mission reported that INGOS do not have access to LTTE-controlled areas. The UN and ICRC have limited access to LTTE areas subject to lengthy government approval procedures. The BDG missions noted the government restricted transport of even basic humanitarian supplies such as tents and plastic covers into "uncleared" areas. The BDG found that food consumption is below minimum required levels. The situation for Internally Displaced People (IDPs) in Jaffna, Vakarai (Batticaloa) and Eechilampatu (Trincomalee) is severe. The BDG field mission report recommended that the GSL coordinate a mechanism for granting NGO access, with these three areas listed as the first priority. During the

CCMHA, the UN also proposed a new system to issue more NGOs work permits for uncleared areas. Secretary of Defense Gotabaya Rajapaksa said he would assess the request, but was reluctant to allow INGOs into uncleared areas because of the security threat and to avoid any possible repetition of the Action Contre la Faim Muttur case.

¶4. (SBU) The BDG field mission noted that Jaffna remains in a state of near-isolation. While the government is transporting basic food supplies via sea, the flow is insufficient to meet basic nutrition needs of the population.

In the CCMHA, the ICRC emphasized the need for a humanitarian supply route to Jaffna agreed by both the GSL and LTTE. Secretary Rajapaksa affirmed that the A9 will remain closed, but suggested that an alternative land route * possibly via Pooneryn and by ferry to Jaffna * could be a possibility.

¶5. (SBU) In its November 9 meeting, the BDG concluded the humanitarian crisis is not getting enough international attention and recommended wider dissemination of the BDG's October field mission findings. Donors agreed that a meeting with President Rajapaksa to present the report would be the best chance to achieve improvements the humanitarian situation and NGO access.

¶6. (SBU) COMMENT: The LTTE has shown little interest in the alternate A-9 route proposed by the government. Ref (A) reports that on November 8, government troops fired on a Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission (SLMM)/LTTE Peace Secretariat reconnaissance trip to Pooneryn to look at the alternate route, probably in error.

BLAKE